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Developments in Indochina

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Developments in Indochina

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The Communists apparently intend to keep the lid on any widespread military action at least until the results of the Paris talks are announced. As both sides jockey for position, however, some fighting of limited duration could occur in those few strategic areas over which neither side has established clear control.

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INTERNATIONAL. 4

Peking's statements during the first days of the high level North Vietnamese mission to China suggest that, in China's view, the military phase of the Vietnam and Laos struggles has ended. The Chinese evidently intend to support Vietnamese Communist efforts that accord with the Vietnam and Laos cease-fire agreements.

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SOUTH VIETNAM

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Military Situation in
South Vietnam

Increased fighting could occur in some parts of South Vietnam during the next few days as both sides jockey for position in anticipation of an announcement from Paris tightening the cease-fire agreement. Such fighting probably would be of limited duration and confined to a few strategic areas over which neither side has established clear lines of control.

South Vietnamese forces in the delta and western highlands already are at work trying to push Communist units out of key base areas. Another trouble spot could develop north of Saigon as a result of President Thieu's recent orders to clear Route 13 from Chon Thanh to An Loc.

The Communists have reportedly ordered their units to "resist all" of Saigon's attempts "to encroach upon the liberated areas." Although these recent instructions from COSVN directed main force units to maintain territorial control "as it is today rather than try to expand it," they also held out the possibility that Viet Cong units may have to recapture selected areas of "strategic importance" before a final agreement on the delineation of territorial control.

In general, the Communists apparently intend to keep the lid on any widespread military action at least until the results of the 6 June negotiations in Paris are known. COSVN reportedly expects that several points in the January cease-fire agreement will be clarified to the benefit of the Communists although it has warned cadre that Saigon "may go back on its word as it did in October." COSVN said it would "await the results" before issuing additional instructions.

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INTERNATIONALPeking's Views on Vietnam

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Peking's statements during the first day of talks with Le Duan and Pham Van Dong suggest the positions the Chinese will take.

Chou En-lai's formal remarks at a banquet and a *People's Daily* editorial, both on 4 June, emphasized Peking's view that the military phase of the Vietnam and Laos struggles has ended and that China should support those Vietnamese Communist efforts that reasonably accord with the Vietnam and Laos cease-fire agreements. The Chinese explicitly pledged their backing for economic reconstruction and development in North Vietnam and for efforts to "bring about national concord" in the South, as they did following the Paris Agreement in January. They also reiterated their backing for Vietnamese Communist demands that Saigon and Washington comply with the cease-fire accords. These statements indicate that Peking would support any attempt to strengthen the cease-fire accords.

Peking's stress on economic development and compliance with the cease-fires suggests that Chinese offers of aid and assistance are likely to be predominantly economic. There were earlier indications that Peking was thinking of reducing its military assistance to Hanoi to ensure stability in Indochina.

These statements clearly indicate that the Chinese are sensitive to hints in the North Vietnamese press that they have undercut Hanoi's interests by their dealings with Washington. The Chinese stressed mutual solidarity, and *People's Daily* reiterated the assurance that "no force on earth can break this friendship." Even if the Chinese reaffirm these sentiments privately, they will also remind the North Vietnamese that Peking has its own interests and that these may not always mesh with Hanoi's.

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Peking's statements on Cambodia are vague, but they indicate it will be high on the agenda. Chou merely reiterated Chinese support for Sihanouk's five points and his exile "government's stand."

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